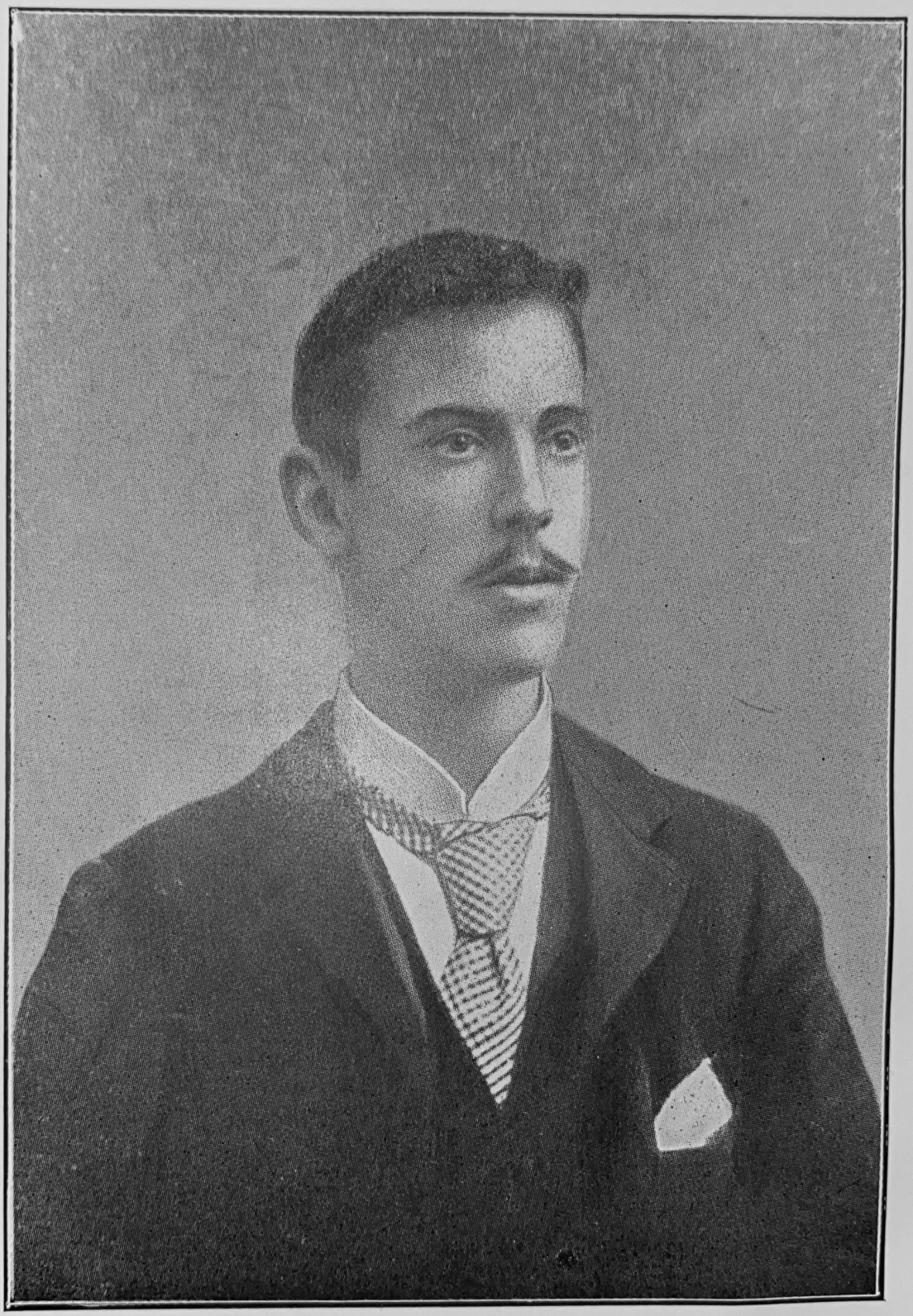

ALFRED RUSSELL.

A

CONQUEST OF GRACE:

AN ACCOUNT OF THE CONVERSION AND THE LORD'S GRACIOUS DEALINGS WITH

ALFRED RUSSELL,

OF WIMBLEDON,

Who Died June 24th, 1899, Aged 23 Years.

IN HOPE IT MAY BE AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO PARENTS TO CONTINUE IN PRAYER FOR THEIR CHILDREN.

BY HIS MOTHER.

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PREFACE.

DEAR READER,—I have, for years past, had communications from dear Alfred's godly mother respecting the intense grief and terrible trials endured through him; yet, more or less, there was always a steadfast faith of assurance that her promise would be fulfilled, though at the time there was not the faintest evidence of any change, but quite the contrary—viz., enmity to the truth, and determined resistance of all parental authority or counsel. "I believe," said she, "I shall have to send for you some day"—meaning when the change came; and I have had to use the words of our Lord, "O woman, great is thy faith!" One evening in February last I was accordingly sent for; on my entering his room I noticed a measure of reserve in him, meeting then as strangers to each other. After some conversation, reading (Psalm li.), and prayer, I left him with a persuasion that his was a genuine repentance; this was deepened with subsequent visits, and a soul-knitting created between us, causing me never to doubt the reality of the work of grace; indeed, so strong did the spiritual love and union become, that I felt it a holy pleasure and privilege frequently to be in the sick chamber, where I found many answers to my fervent prayers for grace and gift to know how to speak a word in season; moreover the visits were most profitable to my own soul, and I often felt to receive such instruction from this young convert as to supply me with matter for the pulpit, verily proving, "It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting."

In reading the "Conquest of Grace," it may appear to some to lack a deep law-work, especially considering the depths of sin and wickedness formerly indulged in; but God is a Sovereign, and surely the Holy Spirit

is a perfect judge of what is needful. He had, without doubt, a law-work, and is not that sufficient which the blessed Spirit owns as such? Look at the change manifested in letter dated April 14th, pages 49 and 50: —"A word would come, directly after my thought of Christ, which would make the most hardened sinner blush to think it was linked with that pure Christ Jesus." Further, page 52, "On my next visit, he told me of a season of meditation on Christ he had been favoured with, when he had need to put his fingers in his ears to shut out some conversation going on near him." His knowledge and confession of sin was deep; page 66, "Steeped in sin from head to toe." Read his language, quoted June 14th, on same page. Truly his faith grew exceedingly, as I could discover in my frequent visits—then about three times a week. Was not surprised towards the last to find him again in great distress, with strong temptations and many fears and quakings, after having enjoyed much of the Lord's presence and communion. On one of these later visits, the dear boy turned to me with a sorrowful lamentation, and the deepest anxiety depicted in his countenance, saying, "There must be something wrong, radically wrong, in my religion, for all my thoughts ought to be on heavenly things, and they are not." I tried to show him that this painful experience was to teach him his complete dependence on the blessed Spirit to keep alive that good thing which He had wrought in him, for every gracious thought, spiritual desire, or holy longing, is the fruit of His powerful operations within.

Now, dear reader, one's aim is the glory of God, the good of souls, and an increase of Christ's kingdom. I commend the "Conquest of Grace" prayerfully to Him who is able to make use of it, and operate within thy heart according to His good pleasure.

JOSEPH WHITTOME.

33 Queen's Road, Wimbledon.

A CONQUEST OF GRACE.

CHAPTER I.

Days of Vanity.

WHEN Alfred was born (after three girls) it was a joy to his father, who looked forward to a day when he might be a help to him in business, and a comfort. How well for us the sorrows of the future are hidden, for from very early days he became a trial, being possessed of a most uncontrollable temper and weak mind, which kept up constant anxiety, and at night he used to be frightened by startling dreams, so that for years I could never leave home on his account, and he was too restless to be taken away.

In his school days he was constantly getting into trouble, and neither punishment nor kindness took any effect on him, and no sense of right ever came against the gratification of any evil desire. His own will seemed to be his moving power, and though he made fair progress at school, it was with such con-

stant scenes of trouble that at the age of thirteen he was anxious to leave. We thought perhaps he would do better placed out young under a master; and after considerable exercise of mind and prayer, a friend obtained a situation for him in London, where he might have done well, but the power of evil was so strong in him that very soon he did wrong, and then, I believe, his conscience wrought such fright and terror that he ran away from his situation, saying he much disliked the work; so that ended in disappointment.

He now promised to do better if allowed to work with his father, who gave him a good trial, but could not get him to do anything with the least dependence; so the second attempt to help him had to be given up, and matters grew worse and worse, for he took up with low companions, used very bad language, and became quite a terror in the home, as his active brain was always plotting mischief.

We then thought perhaps heavier hand employment would suit him better, so tools were purchased, and he went on trial, with a view to apprenticeship, at a builder's a few miles away, and hope was again raised, but only to be dashed, as he would not apply himself to the work, and he was in the habit of taking books and anything he could sell from home, as he was determined to have

money. He even sold a nice new Bible I had given him for sixpence; therefore, at the end of the month, this employment also had to be given up, leaving matters worse than before, and he became more hardened and defiant of all reproof. Oh, how many bitter cries went out from my heart at this time, for it had become a very hard case, and we could not manage it. I was compelled, therefore, to beg that the Lord would *undertake* and manage it for us, as the boy seemed determined to go the downward course. Yet I believe conscience still strove with him, as we heard about this time that he had attended Salvation Army meetings, and twice had gone out and sat on the penitent form. He now seemed too bad to ask anyone to try him, when an uncle in Chichester was induced to take him; and again I prayed and hoped, but again he failed, for after sorely trying his uncle's patience for three months he would not go on longer, so we had him home, and there was another weary time of trial and of waiting upon God.

He next obtained a situation in a City office, where he had considerable spare time, which proved an evil; and though he was there nine months, it was a time of constant fear and anxiety of his doing wrong. And I believe my close watchfulness often preserved him, though it irritated him, and made him

hate me when I found out doubtful things concerning him.

And here I must observe I saw (as I hoped) the Lord's preserving care over him, for though he was permitted to go into wrong things, it was not far enough to bring him or us into open disgrace, while again and again the words came to me, "Thus far shalt thou go and no farther," and I had hope.

About this time, soon after he was fourteen, he did not come home at all from his work on the Saturday. Oh, what a night of anxiety and prayer I spent! He arrived about four o'clock on the Sunday afternoon, but would give no account of where he had spent the night; so on the Monday morning I followed him to his office, telling him I would not leave London till I knew. I seemed to be looking up to the Lord for every word I spoke to him. After a time he promised that if I met him when he left work he would show me. I did this, and was taken down to a coffee house at Walthamstow; his explanation being that he did it for an outing and to spend his money.

Oh the warfare of this time! And one day, when alone in my bedroom, it seemed as if Satan presented himself, telling me he was *determined* to have my child; while with all the powers of my soul I was crying, "Oh, that it might prove that the decree has gone forth,

'Deliver him from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom;'" and I felt that I said to the great enemy, "Well, Satan, if you are to have him, I'll pray for him to my latest breath;" and later the words came to me, "The battle is not yours, but the Lord's;" also, "*Grace shall* reign through righteousness;" thus again I had hope.

Soon after this he was tempted to do a very foolish thing at his business, which, as he expected, was soon found out; so he left his situation, and went wandering about three days and nights before we could get him home. I shall never forget with what an aching heart I went up to London, after receiving a telegram from his employer stating that he was not at his work. I could but feel that he would now lose his place, and then whatever should we do? Then how calming came the words, "One step's enough for thee;" and I at once responded, "Yes, Lord, and the future I can leave in Thy hands." The master's heart seemed touched with my trouble, and he acted very kindly to me.

After we got Alfred home, he was just like the mad Gadarene spoken of in the Gospel. He seemed quite beside himself, and his language made us shudder, and we feared the lunatic asylum must finally become his home. Yet God was good, and he became

calm, and went back to his situation. It seemed during this terrible time as though the destroying angel had gone forth, and I could not feel he was sheltered behind the blood. How my soul cried, "Lord, apply the blood!" and I well remember saying, "The case is in the Lord's hand, and whatever the issue, I know that He will act as a God," and following this, I had a season of Divine favour and rest; and the words were spoken to me, "Say unto her, her warfare is accomplished," with such power and faith to believe that it was concerning my poor boy, that I turned in my Bible to the account of the children of Israel singing their delivering song by the side of the Red Sea, and my soul joined in the same, as though I already saw my boy's salvation accomplished. I praised Him for it. But oh, how soon was this faith to be tried! Darker and darker grew my pathway, for very soon he took another foolish step, and that situation was lost, and with it faded many hopes, one being, that from that place he might go abroad, where he might get on more successfully.

Now Alfred seemed given up to Satan; cursing and swearing was his common talk; manifesting especial hatred and cruelty towards me, and I had many indignities to bear, which I could not have done without the remembrance of the cursing, swearing, and

spitting upon that the Saviour bore; and must not His disciples bear a measure of the same, "for His sake"? On one occasion about this time he told me he would like to hang me up. At first I took no notice of it, but as I began to consider his was just the spirit of those who cried out, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" the tears began to flow, and they would not cease, till I was brought into a most suffering condition of body, and at the same time pleading with the Lord for him, and the words came, "He being in an agony, prayed the more earnestly," and I felt I had sympathy with Jesus in His sufferings. Seeing me so suffer touched him for a time, and he gave me the promise he would go to sea if a certain berth could be obtained, which we had good hope of; but while waiting for it the weather set it rough and stormy, and he turned coward and would not go. And now we were really at our wit's end, and did not know what to do with him. Again I had to cry to the Lord, that He would undertake, and make a way, where there seemed no way; for I felt I could bear no more, and should lose my reason if deliverance did not come, for he would not be advised or listen to counsel. Oh again the night of agony! and I dreaded the days, but help was near, for God inclined the heart of his uncle John, in Baker Street, to take him into his own house, and give him

a new start in life, for which I shall ever feel most grateful. He remained there nearly four years, and could earn his living, which we had often feared he never would do, and I had rest from him, while having another heavy trial to bear, for now the Lord laid His afflicting hand on my dear girl, consumption wasting her frame for thirteen months, and then she was taken, leaving a bright testimony of the power of grace in her heart.* She had often prayed, as a child, for her brother, and I was also witness of many prayers for him in her last days. Often, seeing me in trouble on account of her brother, she would try to comfort me, saying, "I have been praying to God that He will make him a better boy;" or she would say, "I have been asking God to give him a new heart;" and I well remember on one occasion, when she received great provocation from him, and with flashing eyes was about to return it, bursting into tears, she said, "No, I will not, for mother's sake." We so hoped her death would make some good impression on the wayward one, but it only made him angry with God for letting her so suffer, and he was very rebellious when the Lord took her.

In his last days Alfred spoke with the greatest affection of his uncle and aunt at

* See "Little Gleaner," October, 1894.

Baker Street, saying the years spent in their home were the happiest of his life, and his aunt had special concern for his soul. After leaving them, he took a situation at Trowbridge, for a few months, which he satisfactorily filled, and then returned home again. Soon after he went to a situation at W——, where he was exposed to special temptation, but to my great thankfulness there was a desire manifested to get out of it, and he gave up the place, to my great relief, proving again, "thus far, but no farther;" and I afterwards found there had been a terrible plot of Satan laid for his unwary feet, but he was not permitted to fall into it, and I could then understand why such fervent prayer was put into my heart, that God would overturn the counsel of Ahithophel, which at the time I thought so strange, but now I proved that God's watchful care was still over the boy, though he knew it not.

Another door was opened for him, which he filled satisfactorily, but at home his conduct was very bad, especially to me, as I felt it my duty to tell him of his faults and warn him. He became a haughty tyrant in the home, and he cast off all regard for the Sabbath Day, and I often had to cry unto my God for help and relief.

On his twenty-first birthday, February, 1897, I said to him, "We have had twenty-

one years of sorrow with you, now I hope we may have that number in joy." But you could not touch a tender part, or make an impression upon him; he would not be controlled. I have many times been in real fear of my life, and have fled to my bedroom, locking the door, and crying out, "Be not far from me, Lord, for trouble is near," and again I have prayed that he might not be permitted to take his own life.

At times I have felt so sure he was being urged on by Satan to act as he did, and then a strong confidence in God that he would be delivered from it, that I have said, "Ah, Satan, thou hast that poor boy bound, but the day will come when my Master will say, 'Loose him, and let him go.'" And in a time of great distress I had a dream which encouraged me to hope on with prayer. I thought I was in close combat with one out of his mind—a struggle for life—when there was an instant transfiguration, and in the change I saw my boy smiling and peaceful, and clad in white garments.

Many times, when his will was crossed, he would go and tear up my Magazines with malicious joy, and burn them. Oh, how hard all this was to bear! yet the Lord gave me many tokens He was near. Under my son's treatment, at times, I have been so crushed I could not say a word in reply, but felt, "Let

him curse, for the Lord has permitted it;" and then would go forth, "Plead my cause, Lord; I can't plead my own!" and then the words have rung through my soul, "Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him." Yet at times I have often said to his father, "Shall we ever feel light-hearted again?" Then hope would return, and I could plead, "Lord, 'remember the word on which Thou hast caused me to hope, for I hope in Thy word.'" And again, "I am waiting for Thy salvation," while I could often join with the Psalmist, "I watered my bed with tears;" then I would plead with Him on the ground of His word, "Hast Thou not said Thou wilt arise for the help of the poor and needy? and I am that character." Thus I had to go on hoping against hope, and through those terrible times I had many helps from the ministry of Mr. Greenwood, Mr. Whittome, and Mr. Wilmshurst. One such season was a few days after his twenty-first birthday, when I had special encouragement under Mr. Greenwood's sermon; for as he described living faith as possessed by the Old Testament saints, I had the witness within that my belief concerning the salvation of my boy was of the same nature.

CHAPTER II.

Beaten with many Stripes.

BUT the comfort was of short duration, for without cause he seemed stirred up to vex and worry me, almost beyond endurance, only I was so helped to cry to God, "Lord, do have mercy upon him! Do change his heart!" and especially the first two verses in Gadsby's hymn, 515, were made real prayer in my heart—

> "Holy Ghost, we look to Thee;
> Raise the dead, the captive free;
> From the mighty take the prey;
> Teach the weak to watch and pray.
>
> "Now, dear Lord, the heavens rend;
> Make this haughty rebel bend;
> Life, and light, and truth impart
> To this careless sinner's heart."

And, to the honour of His great name, I can say He heard that prayer; the answer came at first with judgments, for, two days after my petition, sore affliction fell upon him. Oh, how solemn I felt it! how I trembled for him! Then I prayed, "Lord, don't let this affliction pass away without being sanctified." He heard that prayer also, though I was often very much tried concerning this, as it was two whole years before its sancti-

fying effects were manifested. But there was a feeling that God is faithful to His Word, therefore I had to be silent and wait on, but what a trial was before me! God did indeed hedge up Alfred's way. First, there was a severe sprain of his leg; then sciatica set in in the injured limb, causing intense pain. At this time the Word of God furnished the best description of his case, that of the wild bull in a net, and the ox unaccustomed to the yoke. Oh, how he writhed under the pain! and he would say he would not bear it long but would put an end to himself. It was truly pitiable to see him in this state. Then, as the suffering grew more severe, his spirit was in measure humbled, while I did everything possible for his relief. I was obliged to tell him I felt sure it was God's rod, for He could not in His justice permit him to go on longer as he had been going, and begged that he might "hear the rod, and Him that had appointed it;" and for a time his spirit was softened, but no sooner was relief bestowed than his old spirit would rise up again of hatred and cruelty to me, as if I were the cause of his affliction. Sometimes while waiting on him I have not had a civil word for weeks, and then has come another stroke of the rod in fresh illness, but he was like Pharaoh in Egypt, his heart was hardened.

After keeping his room for about five months, he improved, so as to get about a little, and went to Hastings for three weeks, but found little benefit, and returned home in quite an invalid condition. And now a fresh trouble discovered itself, for the doctor found there was serious mischief from diseased bone at the back of the nose, and needing an operation to prevent trouble being set up in his lungs. In August it was performed, he remaining in the hospital a fortnight; he had much pain and discomfort to bear, and was quiet and humble under it, and as that had been considered the last seat of mischief, hope was now raised that he would regain strength, but it was not to be; he attended the hospital for some time, and then said, "Mother, I can't go again, for I don't gain a bit of strength." And the words came to me with solemn effect, "The leprosy is in the house, it must come down," and from that time I had no real hope of his getting better.

Soon after this he had another painful and very serious illness, coming at a time when his behaviour was most trying, and he seemed to fully believe he should not get better, and I think this worked terror in him. Perhaps his case at this time may be described by Hart's lines—

"Law and terrors do but harden,
All the while they work alone."

As he got better from this illness, it was found that trouble in one lung had commenced, but he went on in a don't-care sort of way, spoilt by his health for the pleasures of this life, which he had so gone after, and with no prospect for another. What a sad condition to be in! and I longed for a happier state of things, but he would at once shut me up if I attempted to speak to him. He would say, he knew he had but a short time to live, and he would have all the pleasure he could get; and he seemed angry and rebellious against God, and his temper was terribly sour. He would persist in going out in damp or evening air, which the doctor had so cautioned him against.

This weary winter went by, and oh, how troubled and anxious I felt! One year of affliction was past, and no blessing had resulted. One day, being specially tried by his not taking more care of himself, or allowing us to do it for him, the words came to me—

"Seek no other cure or healing,
Only in the Saviour's blood."

This calmed my mind very much, and I thought it remarkable that about a fortnight later he discarded the doctor, telling him he did not want to know how his lungs were, then he should not have to worry, and for a time he was much better, and seemed permitted to go on in his own way for a season.

Then an attack of weakness confined him to the house and his bed again, and we had to painfully feel how rebellious he was at it. He looked so unhappy, while "No surrender" seemed plainly his motto. It was about August that he went on a Sunday and again on the Monday to Hampton Court, and he afterwards told his brother he sat on the bank of the river, and wished he had the courage to jump in. Again I thought, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther"—

"Preserved in Jesus when
His feet made haste to hell."

He now shut himself off from all those in the home, sitting and taking his meals alone, and at other times keeping in his bedroom, when we had to put his meals at the door, for I dare not go in. The enmity of his mind was so great against me, that for nine months he never called me mother, and if I had occasion to go into the room where he was, he would walk out, showing the greatest contempt. But all this seemed to give me increased power to pray for him; truly it was a very painful and humiliating way I had to walk. Thus Christmas passed once more—a sad season. So much to bear I often had to cry out, "O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me. Oh, arise for my help, Lord, for Thou seest how the enemy triumphs over me, and I have none

to help me but Thou. Oh, do put on shield and buckler, and arise to my help." And in response I heard this, "Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O mighty Prince; ride forth prosperously, because of meekness and truth"; and I had hope deliverance was near, and often thought of the darkest hour being just before the morning, and so it proved now.

CHAPTER III.

"Loose Him."

THOUGH getting so weak, and knowing by his feelings he was hastening to the grave, he would not give in, but continued going out, till he was brought home in a cab, faint and ill. Oh, how my heart ached! yet I felt that nothing less than God's almighty power could deal with such a case, and I continually entreated Him and waited with an oft aching heart, yet trusting in my God, for had He not given me His word to hope upon? and, to the praise of His grace, I did not look to Him in vain, for—

> "The appointed time rolled on apace,
> Not to propose, but call by grace;
> To change his heart, renew his will,
> And turn his feet to Zion's hill."

The time was near when old things had to pass away, and all were to become new.

As his twenty-third birthday came round, he became more than usually ailing with sickness. I begged him to let me send for the doctor, or to get something from him, to both of which requests he gave me flat refusals, and he would not accept help or sympathy. Oh, how trying! And this

state went on for a day or two. He looked the picture of misery, and must have felt it too, for he said to his brother, he wished he was dead. Two years since the day that he had been afflicted, and nine since the word of the Lord was given me to hope on, the day of grace came to him. Another and heavier stroke of the Fatherly rod was laid upon him, and this time it was effectual in bringing down his proud and haughty spirit. He was weakened through not being able to take much food the previous days, when a most severe attack came on, racking his poor weak frame, and paralysing the muscles of his eyes, so that he had to put his finger on the ball of one to keep it in its place. I ran to his help, and this time he did not tell me to go away. Poor boy, it was pitiful to see him, and he presently said, "*Oh, mother*, I am ill!" How that name touched me, after so many months! I said, "Yes, my poor boy, you are indeed." The ice was now broken, and I was in and out of his room, or sitting with him, all day. He was very quiet, but "please" and "thank you" were very pleasant sounds to me. When he began to feel better, the state his eyes were in prevented him from his former pleasure of reading, so that now he could only turn his face to the silent wall and consider.

The next morning on going in to him early,

he said he had passed a very uncomfortable night. I just said, "There is only One can help you. I do hope you may be led to cry to Him," but "*That's enough!*" came twice before I had said that much. So I left him, but within half-an-hour he rapped for me. I found him in tears, and he said, "Oh, I feel so ill, mother! I don't think I shall be here long." We wept together, and I felt there was a peace made between us. I said, "Do you feel anything working within, or a concern about your state?" He said, "I don't know, but I have been so thinking of uncle Alf, and his verse has kept coming to me, 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.'" This, of course, made the way for further talk, and to read the Bible to him, and I tried to pray with him. I told him how deeply concerned I was for him, and should he be taken without leaving some testimony that he was gone to heaven, I should feel I had no religion at all—meaning it would stagger my faith, after the promises I had received respecting him. I quoted this verse, hoping he would use it as a prayer :—

"Prepare me, gracious God,
To stand before Thy face;
Thy Spirit must the work perform,
For it is all of grace."

As I expressed the hope that he might be led

to cry for that good hope through grace, he said, "If I had that, I should not want to live," and already he was so quiet and patient, I believed the work of grace was begun.

Thus far, the account has been written from memory; I would gladly have omitted the painful past, but felt it needful to record it, as showing from what hardness and rebellion he was delivered, by the rich grace and mercy of God. And I now quote from letters written to a gracious sister during the progress of the affliction:—

February 8th.—I can take up the language of the Psalmist, and say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul," for this is the day I have longed for, prayed for, hoped for, and fully believed would come. My poor boy is very ill, and his eyes are a heavy trial, being so crooked, but I humbly hope he is *found* clothed and in his right mind, at the feet of Jesus. He had a wakeful night but did not call; at 6.30 I went and sat with him, and was rejoiced to hear him ask me to read a chapter to him. I read from the Epistles and Gospel of John, Isaiah liii., and some Psalms, then had nice conversation. I feel he has true marks of grace—the desiring the Word of God, a broken and contrite spirit, with repentance, feeling what a wicked boy he has been, and asking his father's and my forgiveness, and

oh! so anxiously hoping that his brother would not grow up like him, but be a real comfort to us; and on my again asking if he had hope for another world, he said, "No, but I'm praying for it, and these lines keep coming—

'If I ask Him to receive me,
Will He say me nay?'"

And I can but think there was just a little faith there to believe He would not say nay to him. He so regrets he has not read Jessie's Bible, given just before her death, which he promised her he would do (this was a dear young cousin, who died in the Lord, aged twenty, while he was at his uncle's), and now he is not able. Oh, the tears of repentance he has shed, with confessions of his sins to God, have made a very touching scene, but he seems happier this evening, and he sang three verses of the hymn, "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds!" As I held his head during a bad attack, he put up his face and kissed me, saying, "Oh, you are dear!" He speaks lovingly of his aunt, and that she once wrote him a very serious letter, and telling him he had a praying mother. I told him of my days and nights of exercise on his behalf in the past, as well as of my hopes for him, and there was formed a true bond of union and freedom between us. What a change!

February 9th.—Got up at 4.45 to read to the dear boy, as he could not sleep. As I read the 15th verse of the 86th Psalm, "But Thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth," he said, "Oh, that is a nice verse, read it again."

February 11th.—There is still so much to make me glad, as well as sad. Alfred's poor eyes being so trying to him, he was lamenting over them to-day. I said I thought God's purpose of tender mercy was in it, as it separated him from his former reading, and he never after showed the least murmuring on this account.

February 14th.—From reading the 25th Psalm to Alf, he took the words for his prayer, "Show me Thy way," which just then I was pleading very earnestly before the Lord, concerning a way of providence in a case I had engaged myself in, previous to his being taken in his last illness, and felt I must go through, entailing a great deal of prayer and exercise of mind; but I believe they were united trials, for as we went along, the one was made to help the other in many ways; one being that in attending to that case I was several times compelled to leave him some hours, and his irritable disposition got roused up, and yet proved in the end for his good in working patience; and now, to his

delight, he was able again to read himself, with one eye at a time, and his Bible became from this time his companion and delight, his solace and joy. Then followed another trial to his patience. The heavy gales damaged the roof and made a piece of ceiling in his room come down, and gave me an opportunity to observe how needful it was to look to God for help to overcome all those things which he now felt rising up so strongly within, and he felt hard to contend with; and I found, after any little disturbance he always turned to his Bible, and I could soon see there was growth in grace, and he began to speak of how differently he would act if raised up again. I asked in what strength he hoped to do this; his reply was, "I have prayed about it."

He now wants my company every moment I can spare, to read or talk to him, and he asks so many questions on what I read, so that I need special teaching to answer them, and I feel he is a true learner in Christ's school; yet his natural hasty and impatient temper often brings him into trouble. On one occasion, when compelled to cross his will, he ordered me out of his room, but was very soon truly sorry, and said, "My old spirit did rise up, but I tried to keep it back, and I think I overcame it in the end."

February 28th.—No improvement in the

poor invalid's eyes, though the doctor still hopes there may be; it makes a heavy cross for him to bear, and my hope respecting their recovery is very small, considering the disease is there. I read much of God's Word to him, and he never tires of it. He said to-night, if he had a hope for eternity, there was nothing in this life to be compared to it. He seems strongly attracted to the Lord Jesus. As I read a hymn, a line spoke of "gazing upon Jesus"; he stopped me to speak of what bliss that must be, adding, "His name is Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." He also said that verse in the 86th Psalm, on God's pardoning mercy, keeps coming to him. Truly, what has grace wrought! And now in our home, where he once hated and despised me, he holds me in the highest honour love can suggest. He tells me that since he was about fourteen, and I continually warned him, he has felt sure something would come upon him, though impelled to go on, and there used to be such fear, that when in bed he would put his head under the clothes, sure that if he were taken there could be no heaven for him. What a hard master Satan has been to him! and his own words are, that he has served him well these many years. He wishes he could feel more repentance towards God; feels he ought, considering what his past life has

been, which he describes as dreadful. He so likes that verse which says, "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." This verse expresses his feelings—

"O Lord, Thine only would I be,
And yet I cannot go to Thee,
But, Saviour, Thou canst come to me,
Oh, take me as I am;
Sinners Jesus came to call."

He says, "His mercy is the only ground of my hope." Surely he has learnt the language of Zion, and in listening to it I forget all the past, and feel I am ministering to an heir of glory. Oh, what bitter shame he feels as he looks back on his life! but I see he has marked in his Bible that verse in Isaiah, "Thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth," &c., and also, "It is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not." He laments that all his best days have been spent in Satan's service, and now it is only in weakness and helplessness he is brought to desire to serve Jesus. He can feelingly say, "Nothing in my hand I bring." He feels this verse describes his case—

"I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou
Shouldst lead me on;
I loved to see and choose my path, but now
Lead Thou me on."

March 2nd.—Dear Alf very ill and has much to try him; had to be moved out of his room, and noisy workmen in it, and his nerves so weak. I can but see the outward man is decaying. In the evening he enjoyed my reading a sermon by Mr. Philpot, and another by Mr. Covell, in both of which he found something helpful to his feelings, saying as I read, "That's me."

I give a few extracts that seemed to describe his feelings. In speaking of how Satan reproaches God's people, Mr. Philpot says, "Satan breathes into their heart most abominable insinuations, and when he has done this, he will come in another form and reproach us with them, as though they arose from our own hearts. And then he will say, 'There is no hope for you, a child of God never had such feelings as these; if you were a living soul you never could have such workings as these in your heart,'" &c. Again, after describing a character that has faith, he says, "Poor praying man, desiring man, that wants to get to heaven, that feels the evil of thy heart, and would get above the world and serve God better ["That's me," came with much feeling from Alf], it is not the Father's will that you should perish." And again, "When the conscience is made tender, to hate those fiery darts of Satan, when the mind shrinks from them with holy

dread and horror, when the very spirit trembles, and the soul cries unto God to be delivered from them, it is a mercy, and a answer to him that reproacheth us, our hatred to them showing they are not ours." As I read in the 32nd Psalm, "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way," he exclaimed, "That's good." And again, in the 33rd Psalm, "Our soul waiteth for the Lord," he said, "That's me waiting; I want Jesus as my all. If I could feel the love of Jesus within, I should not mind going, but I don't want to go without that." He said he should read the Epistles, and I advised him to take notice of what Paul says in Romans concerning our state by nature, and then in Ephesians respecting our state by grace. I am constantly seeing marks in him which bear the impress of God's Spirit; he has much to bear in his affliction, and many times I hear him ask God to give him patience. And sometimes, when he is a bit fretful to me, he is so sorry after, and he turns to his Bible and gets calmed there.

CHAPTER IV.

At Jesus' Feet.

MY dear boy now seemed to get worse, and the doctor feared some serious symptoms with his brain, and he was sinking so low in his mind, I was greatly troubled for him. He twice expressed a wish to see our friend Mr. Gossling, but absence first, and illness next, prevented Mr. Gossling from visiting him then (but a letter written a day or two later was much valued). I suggested to him that I knew our friend Mr. Whittome would be pleased to come. He said in reply, no, he could not see a stranger, but later in the evening he became more troubled in mind, and then said he should be glad if he would come; I sent, and he soon came. I may here add, that he continued to visit him from that time, two or three times a week, till his death, and was made a true minister to him, and the boy loved him; and though there was such perfect freedom between us, he always liked to be alone with the minister, until, in his last days, he needed my attention for his illness.

But just to go back to Mr. Whittome's first visit, when he was so low and depressed.

He spoke to him from the fifty-first Psalm, Alfred talking a little; he said his uncle had lately died, and he could only say he had a tiny hope, but he felt he wanted more than that, even a full assurance. Mr. Whittome then prayed with him, and left him brighter, for afterwards he was heard softly singing hymns.

I left him comfortable, as usual, for the night, but at three was awakened with his groanings. Quickly going to him, I found him in great bodily distress, through sickness; but the worst was a terrible darkness of mind; he looked the picture of despair as he cried out, "Oh, mother, all is so dark and such confusion, and I can neither think nor pray. Oh, I did think I had a little *hope*, but it is all gone; oh, I do want to feel the loving arms of Jesus round me." It was a most affecting sight. He said, "Oh, mother, pray with me, and I must get out and kneel beside you." He was so cold and shivering, weak and ill, I dreaded his making the attempt, so I told him God would hear him as well from his bed. I tried to plead for him, and his fervent Amen told how needy his case was. Presently he was calmed, and asked me to read the 51st Psalm, which Mr. Whittome had read to him. As I read the verse, "Create in me a clean heart," he said, "You once gave me that as a prayer, when I was a

little boy." I said, "But I suppose you have not used it." He said, "Yes, I have, but only in form." I then read the 22nd Psalm, and 22nd and 23rd chapters in Luke. He then said, "I feel better; go back to bed, but first prop me up the large Bible, and I will try and read the continuation of Luke's Gospel." I did so, and then asking that *as* the Lord Jesus appeared and made glad the hearts of His disciples, as they talked of Him and were sad in their journey to Emmaus, *so* would He meet with this poor boy in His Word, and make his heart glad. I left him, but not to sleep. At six he rapped for me, and, oh, what a wonderful change in his countenance, now radiant with happiness as he exclaimed, "Oh, mother, I do feel so happy! It came while I was reading, and I have such joy, and love, and peace, and I can read with such understanding. I want to sing and dance. Oh, I do hope these feelings will remain. I can now say, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?' Oh, I do love Jesus. These words were spoken to me, '*Fear not, I am with you*'; '*My rod and staff shall comfort you.*' How my heart rejoiced!" And as we embraced one another, I felt "love flowed from heart to heart;" had not mercy and truth met together? He said, "I felt I must rap, that I might tell you this," and I agreed it was worth coming to hear. I left

him alone for a time, that he might enjoy the best of all company and his precious Bible, and he continued quietly peaceful all day. The next day, Sunday, was a day of adoration and praise, his soul joining heartily in the hymns his sister played to him, and he told me afterwards that as she played "All hail the power of Jesu's name," he seemed to get a view of a loving Saviour, saying to a crowd around Him, "Come to Me, poor needy sinners," and he wanted to get through the crowd to Him, to "crown Him." He was fond of the hymn—

"Art thou weary, art thou languid,
Art thou sore distrest?
'Come to Me,' saith One, 'and coming,
Be at rest.'"

For several days he was kept in a most tender frame of mind, overcome to tears at the kindness of friends, saying it seemed wonderful that those whom he had never known, or would have nothing to do with and hated, should show him such love; and again, as he thought he should soon have to part with his brother and sisters, whom he now dearly loved, the tears would flow, which he thought babyish, when the word came to him, "Jesus wept," so he felt he need not be ashamed of his tears, adding, "If the parting comes, think of the blessed afterwards—everlasting life," while still tears of contrition

and love flowed as he contemplated the mercy which could reach such a one as he; and then came the words to him, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord" —his own thoughts being that the words had reference to life beyond the grave; and having settled his little earthly affairs, he could not be persuaded to look with any hope of prolonged life.

March 14th.—My dear boy knows what changes are. There are seasons when doubts and fears and Satan's suggestions disturb his peace, but when he turns to his Bible he seems to get comforted there, but expresses his ignorance of the things of God, with desire that the Holy Spirit will teach him, and often exclaims, as I read the Word to him, "Oh, that's lovely!" He is most affectionate to me, and often says, "You are my best earthly comfort, mother." On Sunday afternoon I left him in the care of his two sisters whilst I took a walk, but he soon became very ill, and wanted his mother, and I was soon found. His poor head was in such a state, he described it as "almost a blank," and he could not think, and then, worst of all, his comfort was gone. I read to him of the Saviour's agony in the garden, and on to His death, and then talked to him, and he became deeply touched as I spoke of the sins of all His Church being laid upon

Him. Oh, the intolerable load! causing great drops of blood to pour through His skin to the ground. He had never before realized such a thought. He knew what it was for his own sins to press on him with agony, causing a real cry to be forced out, as he experienced on that early morning when he had been so distressed. But this new light upon the Saviour's sufferings for sin melted his heart into love, and he exclaimed, "Bless His dear and holy name." The dear boy says that, although on that happy morning he felt his load of sins all taken off, yet his wrong-doings seem to rise up in his mind again at seasons, and bad thoughts will intrude themselves. This was the case one night when he could not sleep, and as he thought of the past he felt such pity for one of his old companions who (in poor health, like himself) had gone abroad, that he felt a desire to write to him, saying to me, "Perhaps he would take notice of it, coming from such a one."

The following is the faithful and interesting letter which he wrote to his friend :—

"DEAR OLD TOMMY,—Have thought about you a good bit since you departed from good old England, and hope you are feeling better. Six weeks yesterday I said good-bye to you at the station, and my thoughts were that most likely we were saying good-bye for ever

on this earth. Well, old chap, I have been now nearly five weeks in bed, suffering with one thing and another, but principally with my lungs, which are in a very bad state, and I certainly don't expect to get about again, but, Tommy, I've found something worth more than ten million worlds—a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. To think I have gone on as I have done, and *you know* what I have been, thinking that to live godly was a mere myth and fad too terrible to think about. But oh, a week ago, I was in such agony of mind, everything so dark and black! I tried to pray for mercy, but felt I was too black to think of pardon from above, when suddenly the words came to me, 'Fear not, I am with thee; My rod and staff shall comfort you.' And, as if by magic, I was made so happy I could have danced for joy, and my every sin seemed completely taken off my shoulders; although I feel it very hard to have to die so young, my happiness in loving the Lord is so great, that I can sincerely say, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?' My illness is for an all-wise purpose, in stopping me in my mad career. I wouldn't be without my hope for all my old strength back again, and the world thrown in. But one thing I pray, Tommy, and that is, do stop and think. Lead a different life to what you and I used to, and pray for pardon

from above; if you do in sincerity and in truth, you will find such a lasting peace and joy that tongue cannot describe; and it says, 'Ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' Hoping you will be spared a good number of years, and asking you not to think unkindly of me for this letter —but, Tommy, if you knew how my heart aches when I think of the fellows' ways and goings on, you would pity me. If you can spare a few minutes to write to an old pal, I should prize it very much, from one so very far away on earth, but so very near in my thoughts. Please excuse scrawl and pencil, as I am writing this in bed, and am very weak indeed.

"With kind regards, from your old pal and chum,

"ALF. RUSSELL."

March 16*th*.—Dear Alf has had a season of enjoyment with his Bible. His face beamed as he said, "How lovely!" where the Good Shepherd said, "I give unto My sheep eternal life," and said he could join with the Psalmist and say, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none on earth I desire beside Thee." He also said that he very much liked what is spoken in the Corinthians of Jesus Christ being the foundation to be built upon. On turning to read there, he said, "I'm going to look at the

Christian's hope." He keeps very cheerful. He said this line was sweet to him, "God and sinners reconciled." The Saviour's wonderful love to sinners which can include him is a precious theme of which he never tires. The language of his heart to-day is—

"Make my heart a dwelling-place
Meet for Thee."

He has many glimpses into the evils of his own heart, which makes him loathe himself, while it exalts a precious Christ. He said to me, "Oh, mother, just think of it! I who used to blaspheme His name, hate and despise His people, never did a thing for Him in my life, and richly deserved hell for my portion, and now with a hope—yes, a big hope—that by-and-by He will give me a happy home in heaven, with dear Gertie!" He says how he should like that happy season over again which he had in the night, as it is getting cloudy in his mind; and he does so hope his religion is real, and not just a cloak to cover the outward, as that would not do for a dying bed. His comforts are now abating.

March 20th.—Poor Alf, weak in body and low in mind, feels so far off, and has not had a word for several days. I could not cheer him, and when I got him out to make his bed he slipped down on his knees, begging me to pray for him. He asked me to read 53rd Isaiah. When low he always wants

that, his mind dwelling on the words, "He was bruised for our iniquities." Says his views of Christ are dim.

March 21st.—So glad to find A. brighter this morning; in the afternoon I felt sorry I could not, as usual, sit with him, but I found he had been enjoying better company—a happy time of meditation. Said there seemed to be something like gates before him. If he could only get through these, he should run to fall down before Jesus, to adore and praise Him. I quoted the lines—

"With joy run up the shining way,
To embrace my dearest Lord."

He looked so bright and happy, and tried to sing, but said he was so afraid Satan would come and spoil it. I felt this visit was an answer to his prayer the night before, when he felt "far off," and prayed to be brought near.

March 22nd.—Going in early to Alf, found him reading his Bible as usual, when he remarked, how lovely were the 13th, 14th, and 15th of John; the Word of God is indeed his meat and drink.

March 23rd.—A very trying day to the dear invalid, so weak and ill. I read to him his favourite chapters in John, also Isaiah 53rd and the 22nd Psalm. He seemed deeply affected at the contemplation of how *low* the Saviour sank to lift up poor sinners; said, "I

wish I was with Gertie, and I hope I shall not be afraid of death. Oh, mother, the Lord is good! For a little time this morning I was thinking of so many things I should like to do for you if I got better, and then felt disappointed as I thought I should not." He so looks forward to Mr. Whittome's visit, always asking that the Holy Spirit will make it a blessing to him, and the same with other ministers. Truly he is one made to hunger and thirst after righteousness; and on one occasion, when very low, Mr. Whittome's parting word, "He will never leave thee nor forsake thee," was made a great comfort for several days. He says there are times when he can meditate with sweetness on Christ, and then, perhaps, suddenly there come such dreadful thoughts, like arrows shot, making him shudder.

March 28th.—After asking me to read, had got but a little way, when he stopped me, and thanked me, saying his poor head was in such a state he could not understand. I tried to direct him to "look to Jesus," and said, if his mind was clouded the blessing was still his, and none could revoke it. On Sunday we had a happy time together, reading the Word and talking. He told me of an experience: he felt that he was standing a guilty, hell-deserving sinner before God, expecting to hear the just

sentence, "Depart from Me," pronounced on him, when *One* stood by, who said, "I love him, I died for him," and, oh, what love he felt to Him he could not express! I thought, surely, where there is much forgiven there is much love.

I left him to go to chapel, and on my return found him brimming over with happiness, exclaiming, "Oh, I feel such love to Jesus! Oh, why me? why me?" Then prayed that he might be truly humbled and imitate Christ. Then soon followed a sharp season of trial, Satan suggesting he had never experienced real things, but was a hypocrite, and, for a time, oh, how troubled he was! Thus he knew what changes were, and had many of them.

March 30th.—Our minds unsettled by the doctor suggesting he should like the poor invalid to go into hospital for special consultation, to see if any operation can be performed with a view to relieve the brain. Alfred said he could not go, it was too late, and in his weak state I could not press it. Afterwards he had a nice meditation on the love and compassion of Jesus, as on the cross He prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," and of the mercy which reconciles sinners and calls them friends, quoting—

"Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my life, my heart, my all."

His appetite for the Word of God is wonderfully keen, and the Holy Spirit is very gracious in giving him a good measure of understanding, as his comments on it show. In reading some hymns he took the last verse of 1060, Gadsby's, and made it his prayer—

"Ah, give me, Lord, the tender heart
That trembles at the approach of sin;
A godly fear of sin impart,
Implant and root it deep within."

April 4th.—Went out for a few hours; on my return, Alfred asked if I had done anything regarding his going into hospital. I said, no, only that I had prayed that, if it was God's will he should go in, he might be made willing. He replied, "I am now quite willing; have had the words come to me, 'It is I, be not afraid.'" I was so surprised and glad! but later, many fears came, as he thought of the trial and discomfort it would be to get there—the miss of his quiet home and comforts, and of my company—it all seemed to swell into a mountain, but he turned to his Bible, and there I think he found something that caused it to grow less. I can but hope it is a right step, by the way it has been brought about, though the doctor says it is not a hopeful case.

April 5th.—Alfred very calm in mind while hospital arrangements are pending, and seems to look more hopefully towards life, if it

should please God to bless the means. I said to him, "You seem specially strengthened for what is before you." He said, "Yes, strong in the strength which God gives, through His eternal Son."

April 6th.—My dear boy has had a very comfortable day in mind, contemplating the beauties of Christ, as described in the Song of Solomon, which a short time before he had no understanding of, and so realized His presence and love, that he remarked, if he might but feel *that* in the hospital, he could go through any operation. Later he sang, "Rock of Ages," and "Abide with me," laying special stress upon, "Without Thee I *dare* not die;" also—

> "If Thou shouldst call me to resign
> What most I prize, it ne'er was mine,
> I only yield Thee what was Thine;
> Thy will be done."

He earnestly prayed that, should a measure of health be again granted, he might use it aright; but if it was not the Lord's will to restore him, he hoped God would prepare him to stand before Him.

April 7th.—Found Alfred very calm, though he knew his only hope of recovery was through a very serious operation. After I had dressed him, we knelt side by side, and he was enabled to commit himself, his way, and all that concerned him, and me too, into

the Lord's hands, either for life or death—a solemn, sacred season. Then he asked to be left alone till the carriage came to take him to the hospital. Oh, how my heart ached for the poor boy, and so dreading what he might yet have to pass through, but was helped to be pretty cheerful. He had had a precious meditation of Isaiah's prophecy of the Lord Jesus, as the Wonderful, Counsellor, The Everlasting Father, and The mighty God. The journey tried him very much, but he sang, as we went along, the hymn, "Hark! the herald angels sing;" he also felt he could say with the Psalmist, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

April 10th.—Visited Alfred yesterday; found him cheerful, and better than expected. It was nice to hear him say he believed it would be for his good being there, if not for his health. On my next visit he lamented that he could not there have the readings and meditation he had had at home, there was so much to divert his mind, and he so missed the enjoyment of them, but it seemed to my mind, after his favoured season at home, he was placed there to be tried, for we read grace must be tried. At one time, feeling very low, and wondering how he should bear these things, a verse had come to him which I thought so suitable to his then case—

"Ask the Saviour to help you;
He will guide and keep you;
He will carry you through."

April 11*th.*—Now the trial of his patience was to begin; and it must be remembered his natural disposition was most impatient and irritable. He writes, "Drs. W—— and G—— came into the ward to see some of the patients, but did not even look at me, and I have felt very low and depressed all day, but do hope and pray for a brighter time soon. Such dreadful thoughts have contaminated everything I have thought of, till it seemed it was not possible that I was a saved sinner, but a vile one still; but, mother dear, I feel sure it must be the devil, as I do and will love Jesus for His great mercy and goodness towards me. God is good to me for all the comforts in the past and present time." In replying, I tried to direct him to the Word of God as the weapon provided for these assaults, as the Saviour gives us example, when He was tempted, saying, "It is written." I told him I was not surprised at hearing these things, as Satan would be sure to be malicious, seeing he had lost one of the best soldiers in his ranks; but I felt sure he had that in him which would stand every storm of temptation, and that, through Jesus, he would come off more than conqueror.

April 14*th.*—After expressing disappoint-

ment that the consultation had not taken place, he writes, "Oh, mother, my feelings yesterday were simply dreadful! I was in the utmost torture and agony of mind. It seemed as if I did not dare to 'look to Jesus,' and every time my thoughts wandered that way, a word would come, directly after my thought of Christ, which would make the most hardened sinner blush to think it was linked with that pure Christ Jesus; it was a word I would have shunned even in my past bad days. I heard that man opposite (an ex-soldier) use the word—I think to nurse, I cannot tell you now. It haunted and terrified me. Oh, how I prayed for it to be taken away! and I am glad to say this morning it is very little on my mind, and I feel brighter. I was greatly cheered by a visit from an old gentleman captain—such a dear old man. I felt by the chat he had the sound doctrine in him, and he said, 'God remembereth we are but dust.' How my heart went out in love to him! and he said he would be in to see me again in a day or two. I feel better since I left home, but have been pondering over my wasted condition. Mother, I want to say, 'Thy will be done,' and at times am able to say it; but if anything is done which will bring me partial health and strength, it will be bringing me back from the grave. Oh, mother, how I love Jesus at times! and then again

at times to lose every atom is agony! Mother, if anything is done on my behalf, it will be nearly as remarkable as one of the miracles of old, when Jesus was pleased as Man with men to dwell."

April 19th.—Visited Alf; his temperature high, and he was in a state of nervous excitement in prospect of the consultation this evening. He said he had had some comfortable meditation on Christ, also some very disturbed seasons over against them, when dreadful thoughts would intrude themselves. I suggested to him, and he agreed, how this manifested God's work in his heart, for he used to be at home in those things which he now hates and detests; according to the word of the Apostle Paul, "But such were some of you, but ye are washed," etc. He said he found comfort in reading of what the Apostle Paul felt of sin working in his members, yet he did not allow or consent to it, but it was sin dwelling in him. I told him I thought he was bearing a little measure of that same experience which made him cry out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" He continually says, "Oh, mother, do pray for me, and that the examiners may have wisdom given them to judge my case aright, and, if His will, spare me a little longer," then adding, "but still He is too wise to err."

His Bible is always under his pillow. In his next letter home he spoke of being helped through the examination, and as he was improving, it was decided an operation should be performed when he was strong enough. He also told of another happy season, when he felt he could say with Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." He can read but very little, on account of his poor eyes.

April 24th.—To-day found Alf in a very desponding state, hopes and fears alternately rising, as he finds he does not gain strength. Had enjoyed a letter from Mr. W——; a verse quoted, "He saw me ruined in the fall," &c., bringing tears and a very tender feeling. Following this he wrote, "I have been kept very quiet in mind, and oh, how thankful I am for it! I can only say, and think, and know He is a most gracious God, but the suspense is so trying." It was then thought the day was fixed for the operation, but he had a firm persuasion in his mind that nothing could be done to benefit him. He wrote, "May God prepare me to undergo it with calmness and patience, but no one knows but myself my feeling of utter weakness. I am so glad the different ministers are remembering me in prayer, as it says, 'The prayer of a righteous man availeth much.'"

May 3rd.—Again have been to London to see the dear boy, his aunt E. joining me; found him very low, both in mind and body, his cough so troublesome, with increased shortness of breath. He lamented his lack of feeling in divine things; his desire was to think and pray, but could do neither; and in writing a few lines to a friend, had told of a few things he had felt. Now it was suggested he was quite mistaken, and had done a most wicked thing in telling untruths, and all within was dark and cloudy. His aunt tried to comfort him, that this was no new thing, but one of Satan's devices, as she had often been tried in the same way, and would have gladly got a letter out of the post after it had gone. After that he wrote, that if the operation should be done with perfect trust in Jesus, he should come off conqueror for life or death. On my next visit, he told me of a season of meditation on Christ he had been favoured with, when he had need to put his fingers in his ears to shut out some conversation going on near him. I could only say with gratitude, "Who made thee to differ?" and I thought, surely God is trying him by those very things he had once been first in, and he showed a truly humbled spirit.

May 6th.—Poor Alf's alternations of hope and fear are at an end, as it is decided he has not sufficient strength for the operation.

At first he was full of praise and thanksgiving, though it seemed like the last hope for him expiring, and it was advised he should be sent to Sandgate to try what sea air might do for him. This he made a matter for earnest prayer, as he felt unequal to the journey; but as it seemed right to try this means, after five weeks in the hospital, on May 12th I took him down, the lines with him continually being—

"I am weak, but Thou art mighty;
Hold me with Thy powerful hand."

It was a most anxious time for me, for he was very ill after the journey. The next day was a Sabbath of quiet peace and happiness to him, in being once more out of hospital and alone with me. I read to him and he sang portions of hymns, but after another night he fell so ill, and so longed for home, that I brought him home, and he took to his bed, never to be up longer than an hour or two a few times. He had taken a chill, and congestion of the lungs resulted, the doctor giving but little hope of him.

CHAPTER V.

Taken Home.

MAY 20*th*.—Am so thankful at having my dear invalid home again, and he highly prizes it too; his face is now quite set towards the end. Has just murmured to himself—

> "I was a wandering sheep,
> I did not love the fold;
> I did not love my Shepherd's voice,
> I would not be controlled."

Yesterday he said he wished he could feel the presence of Jesus, and be continually thinking of his other home, yet he feels his utter unfitness for heaven; and as I read this line in a hymn, "Ye who find yourselves polluted," he said, "That's me"; at other times he feels he *has* a good hope, and is so weak and weary he would be glad to go. He treats me with the greatest affection, and is so patient it is a pleasure to wait on him.

May 26*th*.—Very weak and wandering, but the intervals prove that his heart is set on things above, which you will see as I quote some of his sayings: "Christ is the true Bread of Life"; "Prayer is the burden of a sigh, the falling of a tear"; "Make all

your wants and wishes known"; "Just as I am, without one plea"; "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all other things shall be added." As I spoke of his dinner he said, "I want heavenly food; come and read, and may the Holy Spirit enable me to feed on it." Also, as Mr. W—— was expected, he prayed that he might be enabled to understand what he should read and say to him; then, later, he lamented his coldness, emptiness, and need of Christ, but later had a short season of rest and peace.

May 27th.—Dear Alf has had a very distressing six or seven hours' darkness and confusion within. He asked me to read to him, and finding that he could not understand anything, he seemed angry and rebellious. He seemed so very ill, we feared the end was coming. Oh, it was a time of trouble and of feeling! none but God could help him. How thankful we were when the storm ceased, and he said the word had come, "Old things have passed away; behold, I make all things new"; adding, "Oh, what a wild time I have had!" which his countenance had proved. He spoke so affectionately to his father, and later said to me, "I wish he could read his title clear to mansions in the skies, but I believe he will, in God's appointed time." Afterwards he sang—

"Oh, 'twas love, 'twas wondrous love,
That brought the Saviour from above
To die on Calvary!"

"Oh, mother, what a bitter cup the Saviour drank for sinners! How lovely to think of the boy that Jesus cured, clothed and in his right mind!" As I bid him good night, he said, "Mother, join me in prayer that I may have holy thoughts on Christ, and feel Jesus with me at the last, so that, with Christ in the vessel, I may smile at the storm. It may be some time yet, or the call may be at any moment." I quoted this verse, which he took up as a prayer—

"Teach me to live that I may dread
The grave as little as my bed;
Teach me to die that so I may
Rise glorious at the judgment day."

May 28th.—Alf quiet and peaceful. As I read a hymn, "Shepherd, seek Thy wandering sheep," he said, "I want to be led back," and soon after he had a sweet meditation on the character of the Lord Jesus; and awaking from sleep he burst out with, "Beautiful, beautiful! lovely! to be filled to overflowing with spiritual blessing! I feel it get stronger and stronger." I asked, "What?" He replied, "Why, love, of course." Then for a time seemed lost in contemplation of the Saviour's sufferings and death, and spoke of when all was finished and justice satisfied, He arose

from the dead; and of His triumphant entry into heaven, to be received by His Father and all the holy angels, while his soul swelled with holy admiration and praise. I quoted this from 24th Psalm, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." Between seasons of wandering he wished me to read of love, in the Epistles of John; then so enjoyed some hymns on death and heaven, exclaiming, "Oh, lovely!" and later wanted to be left alone to pray. Noticing him reading in Solomon's Song, I asked if he could understand it; he said, "Yes, in measure." The next morning he told me he had had a nice season of freedom in prayer, and seemed very comfortable in mind; then had a season of wandering, during which he thought he asked the doctor how much longer he had to live, and was told ten days; he then added, "Oh, how different I feel to what I should like to, and ought to do, in the prospect of death! I want holy thoughts on Christ, and all my mind taken up with Him," and later got very sad that he could not do the things he desired. He said, "I did want this to be a day of meditation and prayer, but I can feel nothing." I asked, "Did you think you could produce it yourself?" He said, "No, for this word is continually with me, 'Without *Me* ye can do nothing.'" I then read him John 15th,

and he asked me to join him in prayer, and oh, how I wished I could have retained it as he poured forth his cries; it began in simple, child-like language, but as he proceeded it was such as one might expect from one who had been fifty years in the way. How he thanked God for all His goodness and mercy, and asking for its continuance as long as he needed it; then thanked Him for his mother and begged for special blessing on her, and that he might feel true repentance for all the past, and especially for his conduct to her, and asking that each member of his family might be brought to seek Jesus as their Saviour in a personal way and manner; that patience might be given him to endure, and be enabled to imitate and show more of the spirit of Christ, and for help and keeping in his weak and prostrate condition, and quoting—

"I am weak, but Thou art mighty,
Hold me with Thy powerful hand;
Bread of heaven,
Feed me till I want no more."

He then lapsed off into unconsciousness, and aroused repeating "Rock of Ages" right through; later, said he felt so wearied, and wanted heavenly comfort; then had nice feeling in prayer; often he felt his prayer had been *only words;* he then exclaimed, "*I will* trust in Thy word."

June 2nd.—For a day or two Alfred has been very low, lamenting his feeling of emptiness and deadness, that he could not enjoy or find beauty in those things he had done; he wanted to feel more warmth and love. I reminded him there were winter seasons in grace as in nature, and though the outward branches looked dead, yet, the life being in the root, in the spring season would bring forth life into view again; and so, under the gentle wind of the Spirit and the rays of the Sun of Righteousness he would revive again, his life being in the root, Christ Jesus. On awakening from sleep he sang, "Oh for a deeper, oh for a greater, oh for a more perfect trust!" then prayed, "Create in me a clean heart," and asked me what "Purge me with hyssop" meant, and quoted, "If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, O Lord, who could stand?" And now, being so constantly in a needy condition, he was most thankful for the ministrations of God's servants, and he looked to God to send him help by these means.

Mr. H. E. Greenwood visited him several times, and was made a means of help and encouragement, as also Messrs. Gossling, Brown, and Stonelake; but for Mr. Whittome was the warmth of his love reserved, as he was made his help in his first soul trouble, and he ever spoke most affectionately of him,

and the love was returned. About this time, before Mr. Whittome went up to his room, he offered up prayer like this: "O Thou loving Lord, I want especially to ask a favour at Thy hands, that Thou, blessed Spirit, wilt be pleased to open my eye, ear, and heart, that I may be able to understand the words Mr. Whittome shall speak, that they may be made a blessing to me, and that I may be enabled to worship Thee in spirit and in truth, and in all sincerity, and may I feel Jesus with me, and enjoy some of that peace which passeth understanding. I cannot praise Thee as I ought here, but when I get the other side I shall have full capacity and power to do so." Mr. Whittome observes his growth in grace is most rapid. He sent a farewell message to his Aunt E——, who had been so kind to him in those former years, thanking her for it, and to tell her that, through the death of Christ and His redeeming blood, he had a hope beyond the grave.

Another memorable scene occurred just about this time. A young friend called to see him, and his mouth seemed opened to testify of God's goodness and mercy. He looked back on the years of his past life, and could see how God's watchful eye and preserving mercy had been over him; that again and again he had been on the verge of ruin and disgrace, but an unseen Hand had been stretched

out to save him, as a brand plucked out of the fire. Also, he could see how one thing after another had been sent as warnings, yet he would not take heed, and God would have been just in sending him to that place where hope never comes, for he richly deserved it, instead of which mercy and favour had been showed him truly wonderful! Then he spoke of his hope for another life, of his love to Christ and desire to be with Him, and with feelings almost of rapture he exclaimed, "Oh, Patty, what must heaven be like? we cannot realize it. Oh, to get inside with Christ, if only to sit on the door-mat! 'For ever with the Lord.' Oh, mother, it won't be long—will it?—before I go home." He then spoke words of counsel to his friend, encouraging her to keep to the good old way, and bidding us to "watch and pray."

June 6th.—The poor boy has had to wade through a very painful and trying season, preceded by reading the Epistles of Peter with understanding and enjoyment, and I found he had marked the verse, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you;" and very soon he had to enter into the experience of it. His hope and comfort all gone; oh, how troubled and restless he became, and fearing what he had experienced, or thought he had, was not real,

but merely a cloak. He tried to read the Word, but could find nothing. I did the same to him, with no effect for a time. "Is He gone to prepare a place for me?" he mournfully cried. Then with great labour he would be got out of bed, that he might kneel to pray, only to find that he could not utter a word, or even a cry, and he seemed nearly in despair. I told him I felt sure it was to try his faith, as all God's work has to be "proved," and later on he made another attempt, and found a little power to pray, then repeated this verse—

"Can a woman's tender care
Cease toward the child she bare?
Yes, she may forgetful be,
Yet will I remember thee."

Also said, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Then, like the Church of old in search of her Beloved, he turned to his Bible again, and seemed a little helped. It was painful to witness this distress of mind, in his great weakness of body. I read some hymns on the trial of faith, which seemed to meet his case with some hope, especially, "Begone, unbelief, my Saviour is near," &c. Then, as the case became more desperate, he made another attempt to pray, entreating that Christ would draw near, for he said, "Thee and Thee only I want." "Blest Comforter, breathe upon me." "It says, 'Ask in faith;'

Lord, I believe." And thus he prayed and pleaded as only a needy soul that had lost its hope could pray. Then turning—so affectionately—to me, he said, "I need thee (you, mother), if I can't have Christ every passing hour. The night is dark, and I am far from my eternal home." Then he had a short season of unconsciousness, after which he said, "Nice, nice, nice! Oh for faith and love!" repeating again the verse—

"Oh, 'twas love, 'twas wondrous love,
Thy love, O God, for me,
That brought my Saviour from above
To die on Calvary!"

"Oh, mother, how free it was! mercy full and free!—

"'Jesus, crucified for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Hear, O God, a sinner's plea!'

Darling mother! Hope that this blank will not be for long, Jesus, cleanse and prepare the room." I then read him the 71st Psalm. He dwelt fondly on the last clause of 23rd verse, "*My soul*, which Thou hast redeemed;" then burst out with "I know that my Redeemer liveth, Hallelujah!" and for a little time lay quiet and peaceful. Then again he cried out in distress, "Oh, mother, what shall I do? All is so dark, and I'm not fit to die! I want to *feel* things in my heart; I want to be happy again;" and he longed for Mr.

Whittome to come and pray, as he expected his visit, and he was continually begging that his visit might be a blessing and help to him; and when Mr. Whittome came Alf made one more urgent appeal to the throne of grace before he went up, and he afterwards told me he felt that was real prayer, and light came in the darkness, and he had a view of the Saviour on the cross, and he felt such love to Him. Mr. Whittome was led to read and speak suitable things to him, so he gained peace and comfort. Later on Alf made quite a discourse to his father, on the life of Christ, seeming to follow Him from the manger to the cross, with a heart full of love and tender feeling, with prayer and praise.

Afterwards he again offered up prayer for and alone with his father, and bringing in each member of the family. The next morning, on asking him how he was, he said, "I feel very comfortable about my eternal salvation, but I want more faith. Jesus said, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and he that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this?' 'Without Me ye can do nothing.' 'I am Thine, and Thou art mine. None of self, but all of Thee.'"

June 9th.—Dear Alf very restless again,

continually in prayer, and I read him hymns, also his favourite chapters, 53rd Isaiah and 14th John, and he became calmed, but very soon had a short season of deep distress, when he seemed grappling with the power of darkness; but Jesus came to his relief, and smiles soon took the place of distress. We had feared the end was come, as he had weakened day by day, but he rallied again, and would be got out to kneel, and prayed to be prepared and strengthened for death, and afterwards cried out, "O Jesus, come to me, please! I cannot do without Thee," and was in a truly needy condition for several days. He became very tried about his religion, the enemy trying to make him believe there was no reality in it, and all past evidences seemed hidden; but he could not be quite beaten out of the hope that there was a blessed reality in that early morning happy season, when his burden of sin fell off his back. But at times he looks so distressed and turns to his Bible, and finds no comfort there; then he tries the remedy of prayer, telling the Lord all within is so dark, and he feels so far off, and begs to be drawn near, and again see the beauty of Christ and feel His love, as in the past. About this time he received a visit from Mr. D. W., whom he had never spoken to before; and again his heart was touched, and his tongue loosed to testify of the love

and mercy of Jesus as coming to him when, as it were, he was steeped in sin from head to toe. In His pity He passed by him, and bade him live, and then clothed him in His righteousness; adding, "This thought makes me cry out, Oh that I could love Him more! Christ is my all!"

June 13*th*.—This morning, on inquiring how the dear one felt, had this reply: "Racked with unbelief and fear, and the enemy's suggestions." He said, "Oh, mother, I do want to be assured I am resting on Christ Jesus, the Rock of ages! I love the Gospel of redeeming love. 'None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good.'" He then turned to his Bible, then prayed he might feel more love to Jesus; and later this was realized, making his sorrowful face beam with joy for a moment, and then it was gone.

June 14*th*.—Dear Alfred's language is, "Tossed and tried about my eternal salvation, and I can't pray, and it says, 'Ask in faith.'" Then a most painful attack, feeling he would be choked; had to cry out, "Lord, help me!" and a very trying season followed; for his sins rose up with such power, and he could not feel he had ever truly repented of them, though sometimes he had been troubled because he did not feel the weight of them as he thought he ought to do, neither could he look back upon any law work which he

read of others experiencing. These thoughts made him feel there must be something very wrong with his religion, and he did so want to be right. He then had a season of distress through being overcome by his temper, which he felt was sin, separating him farther from his God; but soon there was confession of his fault to Him, and reconciliation, and he was happy again, and the line came to him, "And life eternal gain." He so enjoyed my reading Dr. Doudney's "Walks and Talks with Jesus" to him.

June 16*th*.—Dear Alf, worn and weary, would like to feel the Lord's presence and go home. He prayed for all needed grace to be given, patience especially to endure and bear hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ; told Mr. Greenwood he would be glad to go, if he could read his title clear. Thus the poor boy has many trying changes. To a friend, Mrs. R——, who came to see him, he spoke of being very tried because he had talked so freely; she told him she knew that was one of Satan's insinuations, as many things he expressed were very much like her own experience. This encouraged him to hope, as she had been many years in the way, and a day or two later this friend sent him a message to read the last verse of Psalm xvii., as she felt sure it was for him. After reading it, he said, "How lovely to awake in Christ's

likeness!" At another time he was greatly tried about his religion, and seemed full of fear about the reality of things he had spoken of; I told him I felt sure he had experienced all he had said, and I believed God intended him to be a witness of His grace.

June 19*th*.—Dear Alf much weaker; could not talk much to Mr. Stonelake, but said he wanted *real things*, and later repeated, "Weary of earth, myself, and sin;" also—

"Brief life is here our portion;
Brief sorrow, short-lived care;
The life that knows no ending,
The tearless life, is there."

June 20*th*.—In the evening he said, mournfully, "Have not had one spiritual thought to-day. I took my Bible, intending to look into Solomon's Song, to see if I could gain further instruction, but went to sleep instead." Later, said, "Precious Jesus!" I said, "Do you feel Him so?" He said, "No, but I *know* He is." We find him most patient, but he is often troubled that he is not bearing his affliction as a Christian should.

June 22*nd*.—Alf calm and peaceful; said he had a nice season in prayer, between sleep in the early morning, when the words came, "Your prayer is heard, and you are accepted;" but later said, "How dark is my path! I can neither read nor think," then quoted, "When my eye of faith is dim;" also—

"When the soft dews of kindly sleep
My wearied eyelids gently steep,
Be my last thoughts, how sweet to rest
For ever on my Saviour's breast."

It was now difficult to understand his speech, but he lay evidently holding sweet communion with Jesus, and with prayer, as I heard him say, "Dear Lord Jesus, do bless my precious mother," and there was a look of calm peace upon his brow. Mr. Whittome called, and we thought him too unconscious to be visited, but the very sound of his name aroused him, and he wished to see him, and was conscious to a few words in prayer. And later, to my inquiry as to how he felt, he said, "All is well;" and as I repeated "Rock of ages" he exclaimed, "That's it! that's it!" so calm and peaceful.

June 23rd.—Our dear one evidently very near his end and sinking into unconsciousness, when suddenly special power seemed given him to speak plainly in bidding his brother good-bye, with solemn words of warning, counsel, and prayer. It seemed as though he looked back upon his own life, with an intense desire that he should not follow in his steps, but read his Bible and cleave to the truth, and be good to his parents. A very affecting scene, as he said, "Life is before you; with me the day is far spent, and I think I'm going home to-night. May

you grow up an upright man; the parting must come." Soon after he became unconscious, and without a struggle or sigh slept unto death, in the early next morning of June 24th, 1899, and I was enabled to take up the lines of the poet and say—

"I give Thee thanks, I sing Thy praise,
For calling thus our dear one home,
And shortening tribulation days,
To hide him in the peaceful tomb."

His mortal remains were laid in the grave that contained the remains of his dear sister, on June 28th, by Mr. Whittome, who could say of them both, "In sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection."

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